

Letter from the Vicar

Friday 14 August

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This time last week my family and I were basking in the sun on Sandbanks beach enjoying some time off together. Despite the heat, the beaches (from our experience) were not overcrowded although there was a lot of people on them. The sea breeze mitigated some of the heat and I only got a little sunburnt - once! This week we are watching the rain fall and wondering what activity to do. In previous summer holidays, when it has rained, we would have taken ourselves off to *Soft-play* or had playmates round. This year we have turned to Lego, dressing-up, painting, and watching DVDs together.

In Jane Austin's *Sense and Sensibility* I recall the phrase "If you can't think of anything polite to say, talk about the weather"! Well, I can think of polite things to say but the weather has certainly been a talking point this week. From the hot and sultry conditions with 'tropical nights' making sleeping uncomfortable to the storms from Wednesday onwards bringing rain and a welcome relief from the heat our weather has been eventful. I quite like a good thunderstorm and the storm on Wednesday did not disappoint. Fantastic peals of thunder with lightning that lit up the sky and those first rain drops – the relief was palpable. I know of many who went out and danced in the rain! When the storm ended my family and I went puddle jumping and had a whale of a time – I forget how many times I had to empty Abbie's boots! But the storm was not fun for everyone. Some really don't like thunder and some were flooded-out by the deluge. The Marlowes Shopping Centre a case in point. Thankfully the rain did not cause a huge amount of damage to our churches although I have spent quite a bit of time up ladders and on roofs clearing away leaves and debris to help the gutters cope!

The rain (and another storm) made our planned Social Event on Thursday evening a bit of damp happening. Most stayed away although a few intrepid drinkers joined me for a distanced drink and natter. It was very convivial even if it was not the evening I hoped it would be. As promised, I'll try again this coming Thursday evening, 7.30-9.30pm. Tables will be on the grassy area behind the Hall.

This Sunday public worship will return to St Francis' Church as we give thanks for the role the Blessed Virgin Mary played in the story of our salvation as the mother of our Lord. Her Feast day is tomorrow but we'll transfer this to Sunday. You are most welcome to join the service of Mass and Benediction in person at 6.30pm or virtually from midday on Monday. Preparations are in hand to open St Francis' from the beginning of September for their regular Sunday service as indeed are plans to re-open St Stephen's Church. I am most grateful to those who have kept the grounds of both of these churches tidy during lockdown and especially to Yvonne Laidlaw and Connie Shaw who have done a lot of unseen cleaning in both St Francis' and St Stephen's respectively.

Another of the things that have gone by the by during lockdown was my weekly Office Hour when folk could come to the Parish Office and arrange baptisms of weddings or arrange a time to come and see me about a particular issue. Sadly all our remaining weddings for the year have now rescheduled for next year but I have recently received a flurry of requests for baptism. It has been a joy to meet with these families to see what might be possible, with more requests still coming in. As you might expect there are specific guidelines and limits in place but I am looking forward to increasing God's Kingdom again through the waters of baptism.

As you will know, our funeral ministry did not stop during lockdown – although mercifully we did not see a huge increase in requests above our usual funeral ministry in this area. Funerals are once again permitted in churches and a couple of weeks ago I took our first funeral back in church. Numbers

were limited but with the help of a techie-minded congregant, speakers were placed outside so that those who had gathered outside could still be part of the service and pay their respects. I suspect this use of additional speakers will be required again, perhaps very soon, as I don't see the restrictions on social distancing and limits on numbers easing as we move into the autumn.

Now to some sad news. It is with a heavy heart that I share the news that on Wednesday morning Linda Gair died suddenly and unexpectedly. Linda was a much-loved member of our congregation and had worshipped with us for many years. She leaves behind her loving husband Robert. No arrangements have yet been made but I will keep you informed as and when they are. May our prayer for Linda be that she is now at peace – a peace for which she longed.

I hope you stay safe and well, confident and enfolded in the love of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

The Reverend Michael Macey
Vicar
01442 243258
vicar@stjohnsboxmoor.org.uk

The Reverend Canon Dr Ruth Goatly
Associate Minister
07961 980158 / 01727 751542
associateminister@stjohnsboxmoor.org.uk